

THE GHOST OF RUSSIAN HILL.

[CONTINUED.]
Not they only. There was a fourth figure standing with them—a Spanish girl of slender form. She had a seraphic throw over her shoulders and was watching them with a slightly drooping head.

"That must be the lady!" exclaimed Mrs. Addis to herself with sudden conviction. "How young she looks!—quite a girl."
"In her excitement Mrs. Addis stumbled over a stone and dropped her paper of sugar. Stooping to pick it up her eyes were withdrawn from the lady for an instant, and when she looked up she could not see her anywhere. The children were playing on the porch as before. In her haste to gain the house she lost her breath."

"Where's the lady?" she inquired of her children. "In the parlor?"
The little ones looked around, as if searching for the lady so as to answer the question. The lady is not here, mamma," said Nancy.
"But she was with you a minute ago."

They seemed surprised. One and all declared the lady had not been there that evening. "Minnie, the second child, said she had not played as much as the others, and must have seen her had she come. But Mrs. Addis had the evidence of her own eyesight, and went to look, a vague feeling of something strange was beginning to dawn upon her.

The lady was not in the garden, back or front, as might be seen at a glance. Mrs. Addis went into the different rooms indoors, and she was not there. Where lay the mystery? In what did it consist?

From that night a conviction of something dreadful—something to be avoided and feared, sat upon her. Day by day it deepened, like a darkening cloud.

It was extremely painful to acknowledge to herself that this curious and inexplicable thing had greater power over her, in depriving her heart and paralyzing her spirits, than the severe sorrow that had passed over her life, leaving her alone in the world with its troubles.

A vague fear of some ill to come haunted her, and yet she had not the courage to confess the weakness and beg Mr. Evans to find them another home. Whenever the children named "the lady" she shuddered, and yet could not reason clearly on the subject, or decide sensibly what foundation she had for mistaking. She became daily more oppressed by brooding over this very uncertainty, and the shadowy dread that haunted her.

One thing she observed; that the children never spoke of seeing the lady but in the little red play-room. Whenever she appeared to them (if appear she did, and it was not all delusion on their part) it was always there. The singular circumstance was that they had no fear; and whether they really believed they saw the lady, one of real flesh and blood, Mrs. Addis did not know. She would not talk to them about it.

Thus the time went on, and October came in. One day she had been down in St. Anne's alley, and was toiling back upward after her long journey over the sand-hills. Glancing to the house when she came in view of it, saw one of their good friends, Mr. Brown in the porch with the children. He had Willy in his arms, and the two girls were jumping and talking by his side.

"There's mamma!" they cried. "Mamma's come back!"
In that moment the strange and painful doubts were lost sight of by Mrs. Addis: she laughed and nodded in return, and quickened her weary steps.

Suddenly her heart stood still as though it were turned to stone. Passing lightly out at the door behind the group already there came the figure of the Spanish girl, and stood smiling them so close that their garments seemed to touch; but no one noticed her or appeared to mark her presence. She leaned forward anxiously, and shaded her face with her hand as she watched, looking earnestly down toward and beyond the hill. For an instant Mrs. Addis seemed to lose sight and sense; and when she looked again the figure had gone.

"Was any one with you here a minute ago?" she asked of Mr. Brown.
"There's no one here but me, Mrs. Addis; me and the children." "How 't you look! Your long walk has fatigued you."

She said no more. It was on the tip of her tongue to tell him all, but she did not. Perhaps a dread of being secretly laughed at prevented it. How she dreaded the staying on in that house on Russian Hill, only herself knew.

The rainy season commenced early, there was a great deal of it; quite a flood; so that the children played indoors. Mrs. Addis never heard them talk of the lady now, and the children, who were not appearing to them, only twice had Mrs. Addis beheld her; yet she seemed to remember her face as clearly, every feature of it, as though she had known her for years. Before attempting to relate what followed, a hope must be expressed—as Mrs. Addis expressed it—that she should not be charged with insanity.

It was the 15th of October, almost midnight, and about a fortnight after the walk to St. Anne's Valley. Mrs. Addis, very busy over some sewing and feeling sadly desolate, was sitting in her bedroom by the light of the lamp, the three children about and asleep around her. She sat there for company. The wind sighed drearily without, and the dull tolling of the clock in the hall sounded on each rising gust. Almost imperceptibly at first, a soft, low moan began to mingle with the bell; and it caught by slow degrees Mrs. Addis's ear. She looked toward the work to listen, but very soon she felt suddenly chilled. It came from the little room the children played in. She was convinced of that as she listened with hushed breath. "There," she said, "the door of the room is open, and the light is out—well, saw what well might turn her brain. She stood in a sort of dream, not knowing whether she was asleep or awake. The room seemed to be filled with furniture—furniture that it had not in reality—a bed, and chairs, and matting on the floor. On the bed lay the lady she had before seen; the Spanish girl, and she looked at her with what seemed to be a death struggle. A man, whose face was not discernible to Mrs. Addis, stood beside the bed. The Spanish girl made a frantic attempt to spring up, as if to beat him off, and then sank back and moved no more. The man tore up the matting and came of the floor; and a great hole showed suddenly to yawn there. Then, by the side of the bed, appeared a long box, and Mrs. Addis felt sure that it was not there a minute before. Into this the man pushed the insensible girl, and lifted it into the great hall.

To be continued.

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